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Media Release

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
FORT LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI 65473
VOICE: 573-563-4145
FAX: 573-563-4012
BY: Jeff Maddy
EMAIL: jeff.maddy@us.army.mil

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Soldiers virtually step inside mission with DSTS

Story and photos by Melissa Buckley
Staff Writer, Fort Leonard Wood *GUIDON*
Melissa.k.buckley2.civ@mail.mil

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FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo.- The Dismounted Soldier Training System on Fort Leonard Wood can take Soldiers anywhere in the world to train -- from the comfort of a climate-controlled environment.

Pvt. 1st Class Brandon Duff, Company B, 84th Chemical Battalion, said the system is so real that when he's training he forgets he's actually on Fort Leonard Wood.

"At first, it's kind of shocking how real it is," Duff said. "After a few minutes inside you kind of forget that you really are on the outside. You get into it and see yourself as your avatar. When they shut the lights off, and you are in your goggles and everything, it really makes it feel like it's you in there. When they flip the lights on, it's like back to reality."

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While using the DSTS, each Soldier is issued an individual wearable immersive training system and an instrumented weapon.

The helmet-mounted display includes an integrated head tracker, noise cancellation stereo headphones and a microphone for voice and radio communications. The computer backpack is for processing and display of the 3D virtual environment. Sensors are attached along the arms and legs for tracking body positions. The weapon is instrumented with optics, sights and scopes.

"It's pretty much just like you see on the movie "Avatar." You get in, you raise your hands -- it raises it's hands, you raise your weapon -- it raises it's weapon, you turn and look -- it turns and looks, it does everything you do," Duff said.

With the DSTS's nine virtual manned modules, Soldiers experience the scenarios as a platoon.

Capt. Zebulon Pike, Company B, 84th Chemical Battalion, commander, said one of his favorite things about the DSTS is that he was able to design his own mission for his Soldiers to complete.

"This DSTS is phenomenal in the sense that it allows us to utilize actual operational environments in Afghanistan, Iraq or wherever we want. This scenario was a product of my two tours of duty in Iraq. I wanted to reinforce warrior task and battle drills, and their HAZMAT (hazardous materials) training," Pike said.

Pike had the DSTS team add a sniper trap toward the end of the scenario.

"Some of them ended up getting killed. The lesson was situational awareness. This happened to my unit when I was an infantry platoon leader. Now, they know how to break contact with a sniper. Good lesson learned," Pike said.

Another positive feature of the DSTS for Pike is the system can be used no matter what Missouri's weather is like.

His Soldiers, in their final week of Advanced Individual Training, were using the DSTS while wearing Mission Oriented Protective Posture Level 2 gear -- which according to Pike can raise the body's temperature 12 to 15 degrees.

"As a commander, I'm concerned about risk when it comes to heat. Here we are able to train in an air-conditioned environment which lowers the risk," Pike said.

When Soldiers completed the mission they gathered in the after-action reviewing area for the briefing by Pike.

After completing the mission and watching his avatar move through the scenario Duff said he learned a lot -- especially attention to detail.

"I realized that even though it is virtual, the attention to detail is the same it would be in the real world," Duff said.

Reporters interested in learning more about this system, please contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains 80-90,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, one of only five reception stations in the Army, and the Army's largest Non Commissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. A colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.

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Photo Credit: Mrs. Melissa K Buckley (*Guidon*)

DSTS 3 MEL_1813.JPG- Soldiers from Company B, 84th Chemical Battalion stand on the virtual manned modules preparing to participate in the culminating event of their Advanced Individual Training. The Soldiers completed the DSTS mission as a platoon.

DSTS 2 Davis. JPG- Spc. Benjamin Davis lays in prone position, his avatar in the DSTS will also.

DSTS 1 Bois and Alfonso.JPG- Joe Boies helps Pvt. Alfonso Garcia with his weapon.